

***Right now, [Palestinians] are fighting a national liberation war. And our task, not only as Maoists, but as progressives all over the world, is to support them, to give full solidarity with them, to do all you can to expose the lies of the Zionist state and its imperialist methods and rally the masses to their side. So that is exactly what we have to do.***



# WAR and NATIONAL LIBERATION

A conversation with  
Comrade Ajith



**And any final messages?**

**Ajith:** There's no final message. It's an ongoing conversation, I suppose. Well, right now I have published a book in Malayalam on the agrarian relations of Kerala. This is in 2002. So right now I'm trying to update it, keeping in mind the developments that have taken place in the state since then. Its English translation is also ready, so I hope to publish it in both English and Malayalam. And work is going on, collecting material, reading and all that is going on. That's the major work that I'm now engaged in. Then all sorts of current events come up. One has to respond to that first. So that is also taking up a lot of time. So that's how things are going right now.

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Comrade Ajith's books can be found at Foreign Languages Press, including *Critiquing Brahmanism* and *Of Concepts and Methods*. You can also follow his Medium page: [ajithspage.medium.com](https://ajithspage.medium.com)

# WAR and NATIONAL LIBERATION

## A conversation with Comrade Ajith

Published by *Proletarian Feminist* October 21, 2023  
[proletarianfeminist.medium.com](https://proletarianfeminist.medium.com)

Cover from *Ang Bayan* editorial, October 21, 2023

villages is as intense as it is in other areas Dalits face in other parts of the country. The same thing has happened to the Chaitanya thing also.

The point is that there is a question of the class content of these movements. As I pointed out earlier, caste is something very useful for any exploiting class because it keeps the people divided, it keeps the laborers divided, the working people divided. So that is why you see that even when the Turk and Afghan and all these forces came and invaded and seized large parts of the subcontinent and established their rule, they did not end caste.

Rather, they maintained it. So even among the Muslims in India, you have caste. And not only India, it's there in Pakistan also, because it is useful for them [the ruling classes]. So when the class character of these movements or the people leading these movements changed, when they become consolidated, when they come to power or they entrench themselves in power, or they become part of the existing power, then naturally the very content of that movement starts getting changed.

The same thing has happened to Narayana Guru that I mentioned earlier. He is now being converted into some sort of a Hindu saint. Though he had emphatically said that one, I am not a member of any caste now. And then later he said that I am not part of any religion. These are categorical statements made by him. But despite that, he is now being positioned as a Hindu saint because the class nature of that force has changed.

So that is the key to understanding what happened to Chaitanya and all these people. And again, I mean, that's something that I insist in my book, that the only way you can really annihilate caste is under proletarian leadership. Class position. Without that, there is no annihilation of caste.

**Esperanza: Thank you for that framing and history. So that wraps up the questions I wanted to ask you. Is there anything that you are currently working on or writing that you would like to share?**

**Ajith:** That has happened to practically all the anti-Brahmanical movements that came up here. For example, there's one thing that I mentioned in my essay. Basavanna, who was the progenitor of the Lingayat movement in Karnataka, in the 12th century AD, was vehemently anti-Brahminist in his writings, without giving any quarter. He had nothing to do with this Advaita, nothing to this karma theory or anything of that sort. And not only that, he took a very clear position that his gurus, his teachers are the washerman, the woodcutter, the mason, and the laboring people. And also one of his famous sayings was that *Kayakame Kailasam*, that work is worship. There is no other thing separate from work. So this was the radical thing. He refused to accept the building of temples, saying that temples are only the imprisoning of the god, so you should not build temples. The priests of the Lingayat movement were not supposed to stay stationary for more than one day in a village.

They had to keep on moving around. So despite all this, within two or three centuries, you see that this thing has become a consolidated part of the Brahmanical religion. And today, there are Brahmins in the Lingayat. Brahmins and Lingayat Dalits.

Earlier, Lingayat was conceived as a community of acceptance where everyone becomes equal. And it had gone to the extent of having an intercaste marriage between a Brahmin girl and a village boy, which led to a big revolt. And the King interviewed and sentenced these people to death or something like that. There was a big uprising against that. So despite all this radical theory and radical movement, the whole thing was again subsumed under Brahmanism. And you have caste divisions, the same thing you have in Sikhism, which again, Guru Nanak, you can see that he does not have anything to do with caste. He is opposed to it.

And if you look at the formation of the Sikh congregation by Guru Arjun Singh, they were all people from the lower castes, what is known as the *Panj Piaras* in Sikhism, or the five faithfuls, they were all from the lower caste. But today you have the upper-caste Sikh and you have the lower-caste Dalit Sikh. And, the oppression of the Dalit Sikh in the

*Below is the transcript of a conversation between Esperanza and K. Murali, known more widely as Comrade Ajith. A Maoist ideologue, Comrade Ajith has spent decades organizing and advancing revolutionary theory in front of an international audience. Once accused of being a "top Maoist leader" by the Indian state, the campaign to Free Ajith garnered international support from revolutionary groups and leading left intellectuals who recognized his contribution to the international movement. Today, we sat down to discuss his assessment of the current state of affairs, spanning from Palestine and India to the united states. We also delve into some questions of religion, feminism, and revolutionary ferment. This interview was conducted on October 19, 2023. This text has been edited for readability.*

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## **A new leap in the Palestinian national liberation war**

**Esperanza:** To start out the interview, I was really hoping to address a question that is pressing on most everyone's mind. As you know, on October 7, Palestinian resistance fighters breached the Gaza barrier and launched an assault against the Zionist entity.

**The operation, called Al-Aqsa Flood, is being led by HAMAS, along with the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Lions' Den, Hezbollah, and two communist groups, the Popular and Democratic Fronts for the Liberation of Palestine. Could you start out by giving us a few general points of orientation that might be helpful in framing the current crisis?**

**Ajith:** Yes, I think that's a good starting point. I have just published an essay on medium on the present war going on in that region. It's titled "A New Leap in the Palestine National Liberation War." So that sort of gives the broad orientation. It is not a terrorist attack. It is not something restricted to HAMAS. It's not some Gaza or "israel" affair or anything of that sort. It is a New Leap in the Palestine National Liberation War, which has been going on, as you know, for decades. Now, there are some particularities to this war as compared to the earlier ones. And the most important one of them is something that you already note



in your question, is the broad unity that is there among all the fighting forces of Palestine. All of them have joined together. And I believe that, apart from HAMAS, there are other Islamic organizations also who joined this offensive against the Zionist state.

And it's also backed up by the active, direct or indirect, participation of Hezbollah from Lebanon, as well as various Palestinian refugee groups related to these organizations that are already in Gaza, who are along the Syrian border, and from Jordan also. So this is a very broad movement, which I think is something unique. It has not been seen before. And this is definitely a major advance in the Palestine national liberation war.

The second thing is the way that offensive was launched. It's very demonstrative—a forceful reminder, as I noted in my essay, a forceful reminder to the people of the world—that they can overcome even the most sophisticated, ultra-modern technology and surveillance systems of the oppressors and hammer them. That is a very important lesson that has been conveyed by this offensive because the Zionists were bragging about their superior technology, sophisticated surveillance, Iron Dome, and whatnot, but the whole thing was just punctured like anything and they were given a severe hammering.

Now, obviously, all they can do for the time being is to retaliate by bombing and destroying Palestinian homes, murdering civilians, murdering children in the thousands. And they, of course, are going to prepare for a ground assault, but they're going to have a major problem, big damages are going to be inflicted on them. And it's very interesting to note that the u.s. imperialist camp, the think tanks of the u.s. imperialist camp are repeatedly sending the message “don't go for this ground invasion” or at least do it in a very restricted manner because otherwise you'll get trapped there and you'll suffer heavy losses.

So the fact that this has been done by people who have been trapped into that small area, who have been denied all sorts of things, who have been blockaded, who have been repeatedly attacked, the fact that they

conveys a sense of quality, of type. So he's saying that just as you can say that cows have a certain jati, which is their cowishness, so all humans have their own quality, which is humanness. There is no other jati there. There is no such differentiation that he can do.

But Narayana Guru was also consistent in his understanding of Advaita, in upholding Advaita. But his Advaita was not the Advaita of the Brahminic preacher, Shankara. It was different from that. So you have all these differentiations there. So it is not to say that they are one and the same and all of them have to be targeted together. That does not really accord with the way things have shaped up. And practically also today, a large number, I mean, the vast majority, not large number, the vast majority of the Dalits, Hindu Dalits, as well as, what do you say, middle class and all that, consider themselves as Hindus.

So, rather than trying to convince them that they are not Hindus and unite with them on that basis, it is easier and more profitable or worthwhile to convince them to fight against Brahmanism, because that is what is affecting them. That is something they really, despite all their Hindu faith and all that, as Dalits they suffer from Brahmanism. And if you point that out to them, linking that to their practical living experience, that is something that they can understand and unite with. And eventually, whether they will remain Hindu or not, that's up to them to decide. I mean, that's not the major issue here. The issue here is to fight against Brahmanism and the caste system. So that, I think, is the way you should approach the question.

**Esperanza:** I think that delineation is very helpful. I think I shared with you in an email that when I was younger, I lived in a Gaudiya Vaishnava temple, an ashrama, and we worshiped Sri Krishna Chaitanya, who you mentioned briefly in your chapter on the Credentials of Patriotism when you talk about the novel *Anandamath*. And, one of the things I find interesting about Chaitanya is that he appears to be a sort of anti-caste figure in history. But it also appears that the current Vaishnava tradition, the Bhakti tradition, still holds on to Brahmanistic ideas. I'm just curious what you make of that.

***Critiquing Brahmanism***, and I think I already have an idea of your answer, but I would like to hear you sort of explain your thinking more deeply. Currently there is a debate around whether or not the caste system, Varnashrama Dharma, is part and parcel of Hinduism or Sanatana Dharma. Do you agree that this is true, that caste and Hinduism, Varnashrama and Sanatan Dharma, are inseparable? Or do you think that it is possible to separate Hinduism from caste oppression and the caste system?

**Ajith:** Well, on this matter, you have to see the point that I make in that book. It's the necessity of understanding Brahmanism and Hinduism as two distinct issues, not necessarily as one and the same. That is, of course, a matter of debate and controversy. There are some who think that you cannot separate it. But I do think there are [differences], because the point is that Hinduism, unlike other religions, is not a single faith system. It's a diverse faith system, belief systems, broadly coming under this category or nomenclature of Hinduism. And within that, you can see that there are some which are more Brahmanic and some which are less Brahmanic. So that is why I say that you have to distinguish between this. And, the most important thing is to focus your attack on Brahmanism, because that is the root of the caste system and the varnashrama and as well as all other forms of oppression existing in the country. Ideological root, not the material root, ideological root.

So that is why we have to focus your attack on Brahmanism. The second thing is that if you look at this history of Hinduism, you can see that there have been movements that were virulently anti-caste. For example, in Kerala, there was a religious teacher. I don't know if we should characterize him as a religious teacher, but as a savant and all that, known as Narayana Guru. He was very clear on being opposed to caste. He categorically said that caste has no use, it can contribute nothing to society. And there is only one caste that is humanity as one type.

You cannot differentiate it on the basis of caste. Just like you can speak about a specific quality of cows as a cowishness. Similarly, because jati means quality in the meaning of that word, jati, that's for caste,

were able to according to the initial reports, there were 5,000 missiles fired into "israel" on the October 7. The fact that they could amass such a large inventory of missiles right under the nose of this Zionist state shows the wonderful ingenuity and creativity of the masses.

And the technology they have used, from the TV shots that we saw here telecasted, is something very primitive. That's something that anybody could assemble by buying things off from a hardware store and using a welding machine. The superior technology of the enemy was surpassed with some very basic low-level technology. So this is actually a very important feature of this present war.

And the third thing which is also very important is the disunity, the panic it has created among the Jewish population of "israel." There were reports in the initial stages of people rushing to the airports to get out of that country. Already some huge amount of amerikans have been evacuated there and a lot of these settlers have dual citizenship and there are reports of a big rush to get passports of these other countries so that they can migrate and get out of there.

So this whole myth of "israel" as a safe haven for the Jews all over the world where they can just come and push out the Arabs and seize the whole land, has just exploded. And no matter what "israel" does in this war, that is not going to be revived. So these are, I think, some very important features of this present war. And in the coming days, I think these are going to be expanded and amplified.

**Esperanza:** You mentioned the broad unity of different groups both across Gaza as well as in Lebanon. Could you give us a perhaps more specific appraisal of the different factions involved? Because I know currently there is a little confusion among the left on how to approach this war, given that some of the groups perhaps come from more of an Islamic ideology or a nationalist ideology.

**Ajith:** Well, this is something that I've addressed in my essay because it's a very important question. There are a lot of progressive people



who stand for the liberation of Palestine who are opposed to the Zionist state. But at the same time, in this war, as well as in many other upsurges in the earlier period, they have hesitated to take a stand precisely because, as you said, some of the forces involved, like HAMAS for example, uphold an Islamic ideology.

So in my opinion, this is a big mistake they're making, because, you see, you judge a war by its politics. War is a continuation of politics. So what is this politics that is being seen in this war? How do you judge whether a war is just or unjust and who is just in this war? You do it by assessing its politics. But if you keep that aside and you look at the nature of the forces involved only, then you're missing the major question there.

So the first thing is to analyze the politics of this war, which is a national liberation war—it is a new leap in that national liberation war—and take a stand firmly in support of it. Now, the matter of the ideology of some of the organizations involved in this who are taking a major role in this, like HAMAS, for example, that's a secondary matter. Of course, as a Maoist, I have criticism about Islamic ideology. I don't think that is going to lead to the total liberation of the people, but that's a different matter.

Right now, they are fighting a national liberation war. And our task, not only as Maoists, but as progressives all over the world, is to support them, to give full solidarity with them, to do all you can to expose the lies of the Zionist state and its imperialist methods and rally the masses to their side. So that is exactly what we have to do.

And apart from that, you have to keep in mind that...okay, HAMAS has followed an Islamic ideology, follows an Islamic ideology. But in the statement that they have put out in [2017], I believe it's known as a general document on the policy and principles, they very clearly say that their fight is not against the Jews because they are Jews, but rather it is because they are fighting the Zionist stand of the state and the Zionist attacks on their people.

that the cadre of these parties became familiar with these questions of oppression—of caste oppression, of oppression of Adivasi communities, of women's question, etc.—because they were immersed in that reality. And that gave them a very good grounding when they started realizing the necessity of developing theoretical understanding, and specific policies, on all these issues. That gave them a very good grounding to develop those positions, such as those views on the feminist question. For example, what we see in Comrade Anuradha Ghandy's writings come from that practice, from that experience. Or, on the caste question and all these other issues. So, that is a very positive aspect of the Maoist movement in India, a major gain it has, and that is what has enabled it to be consistent on this question. So long as society is divided into castes, gender, then national identities, religious identities and all these things, the identity matter will be there.

When you are oppressed as a section of people, like for example, when a person who is Muslim is oppressed because he is a Muslim, then definitely a matter of the Muslim identity does come there. Or a Dalit is oppressed because he is a Dalit. One cannot wish away that material reality. So the position of the Maoists are not to deny this, that there are identities here. Yes, there is identity. The question is, can you resolve this on that basis [of identity politics]?

If you want to get out of that oppression—you want to end that oppression, you want to end that specific type of social relation that is leading to this oppression—you have to go beyond that identity. You have to address its class roots. And that is the approach of the Maoists by which they are able to unite with all these struggles of the various oppressed sections of people, whether it is nationality or gender or whatever, and at the same time stand firm on their class position; class stand. That is how the Maoists answer this question.

## **Hinduism and the question of whether it can be separated from caste oppression**

**Esperanza:** I do have a question for you in light of your book



## The Maoist line on national minorities

**Esperanza:** Moving on a bit more broadly onto Indian society, you've written extensively on the approach of the communist movement, its strengths and weaknesses, towards questions of identity, including national identity. How do you see the current relationship between the Maoist movement in India and the national minorities?

**Ajith:** Well, from the very beginning, that is the Naxalbari armed agrarian revolt and the foundation of the party, from the very beginning, whether it is the CPI(ML) or the MCC, all of them have been very consistently clear in supporting the right of self-determination of all the oppressed nationalities in India. The right of self-determination and secession. That was included in the 1970 program of the CPI(ML). And that has also been the position upheld by the MCC which both of these are the major components which later merged to form the CPI(Maoist). So there has been no doubt on this matter. It's been very clear on this all along. It is consistent on that matter also. And as far as all oppressed sections are there, it has always sided with them. There is something that I've always pointed out.

It is true that in the initial period, the CPI(Marxist-Leninist) or the MCC did not have a very clear understanding of the caste question, a theoretical understanding of the caste question, or specific policies to address that. But, they did have a consistent class line, and that class line insisted that the party should be built among the lowest layers of society. Comrade Charu Majumdar was very clear in his instructions on that matter that when you go to the villages, when you go to the rural areas, you should take shelter among the landless and poor peasants, not the middle peasants. So, this insistence on going to the bottommost level of society—of making class analysis and understanding which is the bottommost level, and going to them and staying among them, integrating with them and relying on them—was very much part of the ML movement right from the very beginning.

That is a very firm stand on that. And as a result, what happened was

And they quite correctly point out that this whole question, this Jewish question, anti-semitism, etc. etc., all that is a Western thing. It was not there in Palestine before. It was not there in the Arab world before. There have been a small community of Jews who have existed there, lived along with Arabs for centuries together. There is no history of violent clashes or conflicts. Of course, when you have two religious groups, some communalism will always be there, that will always be there so long as religion is there. And that could at times lead to contradictions and fights and all these things. But nothing of the sort that you have seen, the sort of anti-semitism and all that. It is a European creation. It's a creation of imperialism and of the earlier feudal past of that continent, of Europe. And that's something that they will correctly point out.

So just because HAMAS is holding an Islamic ideology, it would be absolutely wrong to come to a one-to-one relation and say that okay, that's Islamic, therefore it has to be reactionary and therefore it has to be opposed. That is absolutely wrong. And the most important thing is the politics of the war. That is quite clear. And I think that is the way the thing has to be analyzed.

**Esperanza:** Absolutely. And, just briefly, some people are attempting to draw an analogy between the Kuomintang in China and HAMAS in Palestine. Do you think that is an accurate analogy or not?

**Ajith:** I don't know much about that. It is something to be studied. But we must keep in mind that the Kuomintang, the class character of Kuomintang, was representing the comprador bureaucrat bourgeoisie and the feudal lords of China. It was a ruling-class party in that sense. I don't think that you can say that of HAMAS.

You have to go and examine and analyze the class structure of Palestinian society as it exists in Gaza and the West Bank and all that. And, it is true that they have been running the local government there and all these things. But whether you can actually characterize it as a comprador class, I mean, representing a comprador class, I think is a

matter that has to be deeply studied. The basic thing is you have to make class analysis. And that is only how you can come to a judgment of whether you can compare it with the Kuomintang or any other such force.

**Esperanza:** That's actually really helpful. So I know earlier you mentioned this is not terrorism, this is a new leap in a war for national liberation. So, as you might know, the CPI(Marxist) released a statement, along with some individual statements by central committee members condemning the Al-Aqsa Flood operation and HAMAS as terrorists and calling for a two-state solution in Palestine. And as you also know, China also supports a two-state solution. What do you make of the condemnation of the operation, the characterization of HAMAS and the other groups as terrorists and of the promotion of a two-state solution?

**Ajith:** The CPI(Marxist) is a revisionist party and revisionism always means political opportunism. On the one hand, you had the statement condemning that offensive as a terrorist attack. On the other hand, you have articles in the major journals which give a different picture. In Kerala, you had a leading member of the party, a state committee member, an ex-minister, condemning HAMAS as terrorists. You had another state committee member upholding the struggle of the Palestinian people as well as of HAMAS and denying that it is a terrorist organization. So, they speak with both tongues because they're interested in making some headway among the Muslim population of this country, particularly in areas where they come to power, like in Kerala, which has a sizable Muslim community, and convert that into votes.

This is not the first time they've done that. For example, when america attacked Iraq, their youth organization in Kerala was all out on the street supporting Saddam Hussein. And at the same time, when some of the Muslim organizations related to the Jamaat-e-Islami supported the Congress, they launched a virulent Islamophobic campaign, attacking the Sharia, all sorts of things. So this is sheer political opportunism. They will twist and turn and take all sorts of positions. So it has no

What they did was to run up huge debts. They floated a special entity for that and started taking debts left, right and center. And based on that, they built up schools, they built hospitals, refurbished all these things, whatever was there, and distributed a lot of welfare things like pension for these people, pension for that section, etc. But the whole thing is based on debts. And that is not something that can be sustained. And right now they are finding it very difficult. For example, some of the government controlled entities like the public transport system, are not able to pay the wages for the workers there. That's true of many other entities also. So on the whole, this whole image of a successful welfare state is a hoax. It does not correspond to reality. That's the first thing.

The second thing is that as far as cultural and social content is concerned, over the years it is becoming more and more reactionary, not progressive. It is true that Kerala is one of the first states to enact laws enabling transgender people. But the attack on transgender people, by the police and all that, has not come down because of [those laws]. Every now and then one hears reports of these things in the newspapers. Attacks on women have not come down. They have increased, dowry murders have increased, and even local Communist Party of India(Marxist) and Communist Party of India and all other leaders are all involved in that. The robbing of public funds through cooperative societies and various other entities, that has crossed all limits. There's now a big scandal going on with crores and crores of money funds being reported to have been siphoned out of cooperative society, which has been controlled by the CPI(Marxist) leaders. So that is the actual reality of Kerala.

Now, it is true that when you compare Kerala to other states of India, you will see a very progressive image. It's not as communal, it is not as sectarian, it is not as anti-women. "As." That is the important thing: comparatively. But if you look at what could have been done in Kerala, it is nothing. It has actually gone back and that is a fact.



**as a model example of socialist or communist engagement with parliamentarianism. What do you make of the current state of Kerala and what do you think it says about the limits or problems with parliamentary politics?**

**Ajith:** This image of Kerala as a model of welfare state or welfare activity and welfare society is a big hoax. There are several factors that have to be considered. One is that during the colonial period itself the social facilities in Kerala were more advanced compared to other states of India, or what later became India. The second thing which played a great role were the anti-Brahmanical movements, anti-caste movements, as well as the communist movement later on. The third thing is that of the huge influx of foreign remittances into Kerala which at one time was nearly 25% of the GDP because a huge number of Malayali youth had migrated to Gulf countries as laborers because they simply did not have any labor opportunity in Kerala. But, then, naturally they started sending back their earnings. So as a result of that, as I said, those remittances at one point came to nearly 25% of the GDP.

So naturally, as a result of this huge volume of money coming in, the gross consumption in Kerala is quite higher than any other state in India. But this is based on remittances coming from abroad. So as a result, whenever there is some economic crisis over there, whenever there is a downturn over there like what happened during the 2007 crisis or the 1998 crisis, it has an impact here also because the remittances start drying up, people get thrown out of jobs there, they started coming back and then all the weaknesses of this economy start getting revealed.

So it was on this basis, on this huge income that was coming in, that the successive governments and not just the CPI(Marxist)-led government but the Congress government also were able to carry out a lot of social welfare measures. But now they are in a situation where they cannot fund these social welfare measures for the time being, under the present CPI(Marxist) government as well as the previous one.

meaning at all.

As far as this two-state, two-nation solution, all that, yes, it is true, that is upheld by all these revisionist and reformist forces. And, Chinese imperialism too has that position which is a radical change from the position upheld by socialist China under the leadership of Mao Zedong and all that. So that's part of the change in the class nature of the state in China. And, they have had very close economic ties, military ties with "israel," with the Zionist state. But after their initial responses we can see that Chinese imperialism, along with Russian imperialism, is now trying to see how they can make maximum gain out of the situation because they see that the Arab countries are now forced to move away from a close association with the u.s. because of the popular pressure. And they are clearly trying to see whether they can make some headway there. So again you will see changes in positions. Overnight, HAMAS can become a liberation force which was earlier characterized as a terrorist organization.

The same thing is true of other imperialist powers also. You need not attach much importance to all these things except for noting how this political opportunism is an inherent part of revisionism and how it always takes these twists and turns in the face of any significant [development]. And, the most important thing is that they don't analyze the politics of the war. They don't address that aspect because they don't follow Marxism. It's just for words that they uphold Marxism. So the analysis is not based on the politics of the war. And that is something that these revisionists and reformists have in common with the progressive forces who also fail to address the politics of war. Though they are not of the same type, and they do support Palestine and all that, but actually they end up on that side only.

**Esperanza:** And so I know that you also mentioned again how this does represent an advance. So in your assessment, does this strategic advance in Palestine, do you believe that it will have reverberations towards revolutionary people's wars in other parts of the world, such as in India, the Philippines, and Turkey? And do you think that there is an opportunity that this moment



**presents that the international communist movement should not lose sight of?**

**Ajith:** Yes, definitely. The very fact of that powerful offensive breaking through all of the Zionist state's defenses, sophisticated technology, and all that has greatly enthused the oppressed all over the world. Not only the revolutionary forces, but all the oppressed all over the world will be definitely enthused by what has happened there. It shows the power of the people. And that's how people will understand it. That, "okay, if they can do it, then we also can do it."

And I'm sure that a lot of the youth in the world today will be thinking along those lines. So this has had a big impact, a massive impact, extremely favorable for revolution. Now, whether it will directly lead up to some gains for the revolutionary movements and all that...that's a different matter. It depends on the different countries, their conditions, and all these things.

But there is another aspect that we have to keep in mind, which I've tried to address in my essay. What are the ramifications of this war? How are things going to develop? If the Zionist state goes in for a massive ground invasion and it gets stuck up there?

And there is every possibility because, obviously, the Palestinian Liberation forces have prepared for that invasion. And, they have already proved earlier in the past that they can withstand prolonged attacks by the Zionist army. So in that case, what is going to happen? And if, in that situation, the war fronts along Lebanon, Syria, etc., etc.—I mean, the skirmishes that are now taking place along these borders—actually become war fronts and there is a massive conflagration all over that region. How is it going to affect the comprador regimes of that region? How is it going to affect the role of various imperialist powers? How are they going to handle it? It's going to lead to a lot of new developments there. And in that context, you have to keep in mind that there is every possibility of the u.s. sort of reducing its commitment to Ukraine to focus on "israel," because that is strategically more important for u.s. imperialism.

them because they are also involved, they're doing the same thing here. Under Modi's regime there have been a number of communal attacks, pogroms against Muslims, and blatantly discriminatory attitudes. All these things are there.

And we even had an incident where some railway policeman, an armed railway policeman, shot dead Muslim passengers insisting that they should shout Hindu slogans, upholding Hindu gods and all that. So all these things are going on here. So actually they would be quite happy to see the Arabs being Muslim, Arabs being butchered in Palestine, murdered in Palestine.

And the third thing is their relation to u.s. imperialism. The Zionist state has all along been a firm part of the u.s. imperialist camp. Ever since the downfall of the Soviet socialist state, the Indian ruling classes also have been moving towards closer relations with the u.s. imperialism. You cannot say that they are now firmly a part of that camp, but definitely their ties with u.s. imperialism have greatly increased and they are more inclined or angled towards that rather than the other imperialist powers, especially Russian imperialists. So that is also another factor.

And you can see that is not just Hindutva business. It is related to the necessities of the Indian ruling classes as such because this relation with the Zionist state was formalized under Narasimha Rao who was a Congress Prime Minister. So, this is the relation.

And, all national liberation wars, whether it will be in Palestine or Kashmir or other parts of the country here, all of them naturally would ultimately have to aim at the destruction of the oppressor state, whichever it might be. That way there is a commonality that you can see between all these struggles.

## **The question of Kerala and parliamentary politics**

**Esperanza:** Earlier you talked a bit about Kerala. I would like to pivot there for a second. In the u.s., some look to the Kerala state

we were Naxalites and Maoists. So, that is the material outcome of this. Or, you can say, a positive material outcome of repression. It does increase the tendencies of unity.

## **Hindutva fascism and zionism: The connection between India and the zionist entity**

**Esperanza:** Connecting the current situation of India with that of Palestine, the Hindutva forces in India have been very supportive of, you look online and you see a lot of, you know, talk very favorably also of Zionism, despite Hindutva forces at other times openly praising Hitler or Nazi sympathizers. What do you make of the connection between Hindu nationalism and Zionism? Do you see any continuity between the struggle in Kashmir and in Palestine? And could you speak at all to the relation between India and the Zionist entity?

**Ajith:** Well, you have to keep in mind that the Zionism after the foundation of “israel,” I think, should be qualitatively distinguished from the Zionism that existed before that and the way it has evolved since then.

There is nothing now to distinguish this Zionism from Nazism as far as its aggressive, oppressive, genocidal attack on the Arabs are concerned. I mean, how can you distinguish that from what Hitler was doing to the Jews in Europe? And I believe that is one important reason why there are a lot of Jews who denounce this Zionist attack. They see the parallel between what their forefathers, their parents had to suffer under Hitler and what is happening today under this Zionist state in Palestine.

Now, as far as the Hindutva thing is concerned, Zionism and Brahmanism basically ideologically are racist. So there is every reason for them to identify with each other. That’s one aspect. The second thing is the Islamophobia. When the Hindutva forces here see the Zionists over there butchering Arabs who are Muslims, that naturally gladdens

Already there are indications. You can see in the Western press that there are discussions in the mainstream press about how Europe has now to take a bigger role [in Ukraine], since the U.S. will be mainly engaged with “israel.” But what is the capacity of these imperialist powers? I mean, how much can they sustain these two proxy wars? It’s quite possible that at a certain point they will come to the conclusion of “let’s let go of Ukraine and focus on ‘israel,’ because that’s more important.”

And you can have a change of government in Ukraine, some new person coming in, having a ceasefire with Russia. All sorts of things are possible. But what would be its impact? All this tall talk about protecting the sovereignty of Ukraine and how quickly that is sacrificed for their own gains, what would be the realization of the people among them, of the Ukrainian people, of the people all over Europe about what actually is happening here? That all the talk of nationalism and sovereignty are just tools used to carry out their imperialist plans. So what reaction would that create? I mean, a lot of possibilities are opening up here.

Now, whether the revolutionary forces would be able to capitalize on that, utilize that, that very much depends upon their state of preparation and, absolutely above all, on their ideological clarity. You don’t have to be a big force. We must have ideological clarity. Today, there are enough and more opportunities for taking your message to thousands and thousands of people through various social media. And the correct position, a correct analysis of the developments...that would definitely attract new forces and you will be able to generate a far bigger force than what you actually are.

So that potential is there in the world situation today. That possibility is there. That technology is available, and is easily masterable, as has been already demonstrated in Palestine. The question is whether you take the initiative or not. And I’m sure that there are a lot of forces who will come forward to take the initiative.

**Esperanza:** There has recently been a shift in the rhetoric of



the liberals in the united states. They went from condemning HAMAS and the resistance as terrorists, saying, “I stand with ‘israel,’” to now calling for a ceasefire and talking about the massacres in Gaza. What do you make of such propositions such as a ceasefire?

**Ajith:** Well, a call for a ceasefire is, obviously, not at all correct. We have a new leap in the national liberation war. And the resistance forces, the fighters of national liberation forces in Palestine, are definitely for continuing that offensive course. Of course, not in exactly the same manner as it was done on the 7th, but of continuing that armed struggle. So this whole talk of ceasefire is absolutely wrong.

But at the same time, this shift is significant. This is the fact that this section had to move, as you say, from the position of upholding “israel” to one of calling for a ceasefire and also, this necessity of advising the Zionist state not to go for a total attack and all these things. That very clearly shows, one, the power of the resistance. That is not an insignificant matter. It’s not just that people are changing their opinions because of the murderous bombing that is taking place in Gaza and the sight of all these people being killed, bombing of hospitals, etc. It’s not just that.

It’s also the fact that it’s nearly two weeks since the offensive started. And despite all this bombing, despite all the siege and blockade and all these things, the Palestinian liberation forces are still hammering the Zionist state with missiles. That shows the potential of the resistance. So that also is a factor which makes people, liberals, even sections of the ruling classes, realize that it’s not an easy cakewalk. It’s better to take a different tactic altogether, otherwise you can get stuck up in something bad.

And as far as u.s. imperialism and all that is concerned, because these liberal sections are also quite influenced by the imperialist views, they would prefer to end this as fast as possible so that they can concentrate all their focus on meeting the challenge put up by Russian imperialism and particularly Chinese imperialism. So there are various things going

This is a general mood. For example, you have seen attacks on youngsters protesting against the Zionist attack on Palestine. People have been attacked even not just in Delhi and BJP-controlled states, but even in a place like Telangana, which is not a BJP-controlled state, as I mentioned earlier. So this is a common factor, and the Modi regime is definitely promoting it at a larger and wider scale.

**Esperanza:** Do you think that the state repression will strengthen the Maoist forces or affect it in a different way?

**Ajith:** Well, repression calls up resistance. To that extent, it will be strengthening it. But beyond that, one cannot say. It also causes losses, so one cannot deny that. But, there is another factor. This broadening of the repression that has been going on for some time, objectively, what does it give rise to? There are a lot of forces who are hesitant to join up with Maoist forces. For example, we see here, even in Kerala public activities, protest activities, a lot of forces used to keep away if Maoist or pro-Maoist sympathizer forces were involved. They would insist that these people should declare that they are not for violence which, obviously, would not be acceptable to the maoist sympathizers and the genuine left forces.

But that slowly starts changing because everybody is getting attacked. And, no matter what you want, subjectively what you might think of, you are pushed by these events, by this oppression, by this repression, to come together, to join and protest together. Because, the realization slowly comes up that we cannot do it alone. So in that sense, repression does have the effect of uniting forces. And, a fascist crackdown, a total fascist crackdown, like suppression of democratic rights and all that, we have already passed through such a period during the Indira Gandhi regime in 1975–76.

I was an underground activist during those years, and I do remember that one impact of that repression was that our unity at the bottommost level—though formally, there was no unity at the higher levels—the forces, members of political parties who are suffering from this repression would be quite willing to give us shelter fully knowing that



and all sectors of the society are really worsening under Modi's regime, the RSS regime. That's one aspect. The second aspect is that a great amount of favors are being granted to a section of compradors, specifically from Gujarat which is a Modi state. And, that is also causing a lot of heartburn among the other compradors. There is a lot of dissatisfaction, a lot of exposures are coming up because of that also. And the third thing is that elections are coming up. In 2024, we are going to have a fresh round of elections. So because of all these, this repression is getting intensified.

And above all you have to keep in mind that when the Modi government—Modi took power in 2014—the claim was that the Maoist movement would be finished off in a year or two. Now, nearly ten years are coming to pass and every year they say next year, next year. But it's still not anywhere near next year. Now, it is still mainly contained in the particular region of the country.

But the fact that it is there—that it is persisting, it is able to inflict damage on the Indian ruling classes' state machinery—that itself is a matter of inspiration for the people here. Therefore, they have to clamp down on all sorts of dissent, all sorts of protest and create a fascist atmosphere. It has not yet become a formal fascist state where the constitution is suspended, democratic rights are suspended and all that. But, fascization has intensified and broadened like never before. That is going on, there is no doubt about it.

In fact I myself have been implicated in a new UAPA case along with some journalist in Kerala, along with some other human rights activists of Kerala and all that. In Telangana it's a different state altogether. And not only that, you can see that there in Telangana hundreds of people are being implicated in UAPA cases. That's another thing that one has to keep in mind, that this is not just something that is being done purely by the Modi regime or the BJP government. The government in power in Telangana is a BRS one. That's a different party altogether. In Kerala, as you know, it's a CPI(Marxist) led government. In other states also, various other governments are there. But whichever the government, all of them have a common theme of suppressing dissent.

on behind this liberal position.

And this call for a ceasefire is seen most probably as a “respectable” way of getting out of this mess.

## **Bourgeois feminism and its limitations in light of Palestine**

**Esperanza:** I think that adds a lot of clarity and really offers a more substantive explanation for the shift that we're witnessing. And so, on that note, many feminists have denounced the Palestinian resistance. Radical feminists are denouncing groups like HAMAS due to supposed male chauvinism, as well as promoting sorts of imperialist and Zionist lies, such as the debunked claims of rape. On the other hand, postmodern feminists like Judith Butler are denouncing violence as a whole. Given the alignment of feminism with imperialism, do you think that there is any use in trying to reclaim a revolutionary or proletarian feminism?

**Ajith:** Well, I think this whole question of various trends, ruling class as well as other types of trends within the broad category of feminism, has been there all along. And I think it has been clearly explained and characterized by José Carlos Mariátegui, where he clearly speaks of the three types of feminism: the bourgeois feminism, the petit-bourgeois feminism, and the proletarian feminism. So that has always been there and will be there in the future also. And as far as this criticism of opposition to the Palestinian national liberation struggle on the charge of its male chauvinism...Oh yes, male chauvinism is there no doubt. It will be there if you have an Islamic ideology. That is inevitable. It's part of every religion existing as of today. So there's no quarrel over there. But, the point is that this is not the criteria to judge this war or the struggle that HAMAS is waging, as I mentioned earlier. That actually comes from a class outlook. Though they claim to be feminists, and all that, their feminism is limited to their class. And, particularly when it comes from imperialist countries, [their feminism] is limited to their imperialist position in the world today, the privileged imperialist

position in the world today. So I don't think we should reject feminism as such because of all this erroneous thinking, bourgeois thinking, petit-bourgeois thinking and all that. Rather, we should struggle, expose its class content, and expose how it is erroneous.

Because, the Palestinian liberation struggle has a great history of women fighters. Leila Khaled, for example, is still inspiring youngsters in, for example, Kerala. You see Instagram posts about Leila Khaled and all these things. Of course, with HAMAS and all these things, that is no longer there. But that doesn't go and there is a limit to which you can control.

Interestingly, I was reading an article about the Jewish community in "israel." I forgot its name, a very orthodox community. The interesting thing is that the majority of the females of that community go to work and they are now supporting their families, while the males are mainly stuck up with some religious studies and all these things. And, as a result of this, of that shift in the economic position, they have started challenging their religious preachers. They are still Zionist and all that. There is no change in that. But, what I am saying is that material conditions—class conditions—will inevitably impose itself over all this other nonsense. So that is what we have to keep sight of. And, we should definitely uphold what is positive in proletarian feminism, and take whatever is positive in the other trends also, with a clear class understanding.

## **On the history of proletarian feminism**

**Esperanza:** That definitely makes a lot of sense. The class analysis and especially understanding the political lines of the bourgeois feminists from imperialist countries. Going a little deeper into that, there is a current debate around whether or not the label proletarian feminism is a useful one. Some trends within the Marxist or Maoist movement promote it, defining it simply as the MLM line on the woman question, whereas others say that it is revisionist and that Ghandy herself never used the

should not be forgotten. So, as I again stress, the point is class analysis. Analyze, find out what is the class character, and then base your tactical or whatever positions on that basis. You can take tactical positions, but it should be based on class analysis.

## **State repression of Arundhati Roy, journalists, and the Maoists**

**Esperanza:** Recently we learned of the Modi government targeting Arundhati Roy with sedition charges for a speech she gave in 2010 about Kashmir. Additionally, we learned of the recent arrest of two Maoist sympathizers and of multiple cadres. We also know that journalists at the NewsClick paper, which I believe is affiliated with one of the revisionist parties, was raided and charged under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA). What do you make of this state repression? And do you believe that it is intensifying or relatively uniform with the previous practices of the Modi government?

**Ajith:** No, it is definitely intensifying. Intensifying and broadening. For example, the range of people being targeted is [expanding]. As you said, now this NewsClick journal, it is not a Maoist journal. It is not associated with Maoism. I don't know whether you could characterize it as something directly associated with the CPI(Marxist), but allied with that, quite closely allied with that. And as you know, the CPI(Marxist) is an important part of the ruling structure here. It's ruling here in Kerala, it was ruling in West Bengal, it was a part of UPA, that's the alliance with the Congress in the lead. So it's very much part of the ruling structure here. So, the fact that they are being targeted and one of the raids took place in the house allotted to the secretary of the CPI(Marxist)...that sort of shows how the thing is being broadened, intensified and broadened. That is related to two things.

One is the contradictions within the country are intensifying. Because, despite all the tall claims of having made India a superpower, the fact is that conditions of the masses and the conditions of the economy



bureaucrat bourgeois and feudalists. How can they be anti-imperialist? What you call as left is actually left only in the sense that they are not right. Other than that, there is nothing left about it. There is not even an iota of Marxism in their understanding.

I mean, that's very similar to what you see, for example, now in this *Monthly Review* trend. They are very consciously promoting Russian imperialism and Chinese imperialism because of some misguided thinking that it is going to stand up against u.s. Imperialism. Yes, there is a contention right now with the u.s. imperialist camp. But, you have to keep in mind that all imperialists ultimately can switch sides anytime they want [depending] on where they think that their interests lie.

For example, what was Trump trying to do? Trump was trying to patch up some alliance with Russia against Chinese imperialism. And, I believe that is still a very powerful trend of thinking among the section of the u.s. ruling classes. It could happen also. And so when that happens, then what do you say?

So the whole thing is not to see who's opposing whom and all that, but rather to understand the class character of these powers and base your understanding analysis on that. And, as far as this contention is concerned, this imperialist contention, like for example, if you look at South Asia...South Asia has always for a long time been considered as a sort of backyard of the Indian ruling classes. The other imperialist powers were also accepting that, more or less. But with the rise of Chinese imperialism, the scene has changed. Chinese imperialism is very aggressively pushing forward because it wants to contain India and see that India does not upset its plans. And, as a result of that, what is happening is that these countries—South Asian countries like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal—now have an opportunity to bargain because both of these powers are there.

India is not equivalent to China, but it still has a lot of clout in this region. So, they can bargain and get some advantages, no doubt about that. But, ultimately China is an imperialist power, and one should not forget that. And, India is an expansionist power and that also

**term. Where do you stand on this debate?**

**Ajith:** Well, that's a matter of debate and I don't think it's been conclusively decided as yet. Now, it's true that Comrade Anuradha Ghandy did not use that term. That is true. But, at the same time, I have not seen any criticism of that term as such. And, you must remember that Carlos Mariátegui's writings on this matter were becoming known quite late. I believe it was towards the mid-'90s or late-'90s that [Mariátegui's writings] only started becoming noticed here as far as this part of the world is concerned. So, personally, I think that is a correct characterization. That Mariátegui has quite correctly characterized it, [feminism], based on the class outlook.

And, we should definitely not give up feminism and leave it to the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois sections, but rather lay claim on it because, as we know, all the major developments on the women's question came from Marxist positions.

Engels' work was a pathbreaking work. Of course, it had its limitations coming at that period with the limited information available at that time. But, it was a pathbreaking work which still informs and gives clarity on these questions. And, if you look at the major things, like International Women's Day, they came from workers, from working women. And, they played a major role. If you look at the suffragette movement and all that, yes, it was a bourgeois and petit-bourgeois movement. But, who were the masses who came out for that? Because, certainly, most of them were working women again. And, the October Revolution also. So, this whole point of proletarian feminism, I do think, has a strong material background as well as a strong class position where we can take a stand and rely upon to struggle against the erroneous trends, other class outlooks, alien class outlooks on this matter.

But, as I said, that's a matter to be debated and it's not a conclusive position. This is purely my personal view, so it should not be taken as some official or final view or anything of that sort.

**Esperanza:** Thank you for clarifying that. Regarding your



statement about all of the major developments in the women's movement coming from proletarian women and Marxist movements, I think one of the most unfortunate things is that when young people learn about feminism today, it is completely stripped of that proletarian and communist history.

**Ajith:** True.

**Esperanza:** For the last question I have for you on the woman's question I wanted to ask you—It's been stated that both Anuradha Ghandy and Hisila Yami were founding figures of proletarian feminism, or, perhaps, the Maoist line on the woman's question. However Yami eventually capitulated to revisionism and the Prachanda Path. What do you make of her work now? And, do you believe that it still contains useful material for those of us attempting to understand the Marxist or the Maoist line on the woman's question?

**Ajith:** First of all, this whole question of whether Comrade Anuradha Ghandy and Hisila Yami could be considered as founding figures, I don't think that is correct. Because, it's not that they started out from a point blank position, a zero position. They were building on what has already been done by earlier Marxists, by Marxist-Leninist-Maoists (MLM). So, they were picking up and developing it in the light of their own study as well as the experiences and struggles that were going on in their own context. So, that I think should be the way of understanding them. They were definitely important figures and contributed [to the Marxist line on the woman's question]. And, definitely Comrade Anuradha Ghandy, until her very end of her life persisted in that revolutionary path and therefore showed us a great model of self-sacrifice and service to the people. Whereas Hisila Yami betrayed the revolutionary path—betrayed the class—and went over to the enemy's side.

But at the same time, I think that the question of how we should judge her work, her theoretical work...Yes, definitely, one has to critically examine it today in light of the later developments of positions that

try to find out somewhere you have to mention that caste surname so that they can locate you and say "okay, this guy is this caste."

Particularly in Kerala, there is a scene where, unlike North India, it's difficult to make out a person by the color of their skin. You have very dark Brahmins as well as fair-skin Dalits. Just by looking at the skin color, you could not determine whether this guy is a Brahmin or a Dalit or whatever. So, naturally, they had to go around and round and ask these sorts of questions. It's very similar to this touching of the shoulder.

Just imagine these guys are living there, in the most advanced imperialist country, enjoying all its comforts, and still they cannot get rid of that Brahminical, backward thinking.

## **BRICS and the debate over how to orient ourselves towards this emerging alliance**

**Esperanza:** Many on the left are starting to believe that BRICS represents a real threat to imperialism and serves as a progressive force. What is your assessment of BRICS and its role at this moment? And, how do you think the left or the revolutionary movement should orient itself towards?

**Ajith:** These sort of views come from this understanding that Russia and China are somehow not imperialist countries. There is no class analysis of the character of the ruling classes of Russia or China. If one does that class analysis, one can very clearly understand that they are imperialist powers. So if they are imperialist powers, an association, a grouping of countries that are predominantly led by these two powers, how can it be an anti-imperialist force? That's very clear.

The second thing is the class character of the countries that are there in like, for example, India, Brazil, South Africa, and also on. What is the nature of these countries? And, what is the class nature of the ruling classes of these countries? Clearly, it's a matter of comprador

the ruling classes in maintaining this precisely because it is a division of laborers.

So, there is absolutely great necessity because when you fight against caste, and if you fight against caste in a proper manner—going deeper into it and understanding its relation to class and all these other aspects—then you're heightening awareness against oppression and exploitation in general. So, the fight against caste in amerika would definitely not limit itself to the caste question of the Hindus alone.

It would have lessons and inspiration for other oppressed communities also. For example, the Blacks or the Chicanos or Puerto Ricans and various other forces that are minorities and oppressed sections, such as the Indigenous peoples. So this goes beyond because caste is basically a very potent tool employed by the exploiters to divide the people and oppress them.

**Esperanza: The law that was vetoed by the governor was in my state in California. And, this is also the state where there was the lawsuit of caste discrimination against Cisco as well as Dalit workers reporting Brahmin or other caste coworkers doing things like touching their shoulder to see if they have a thread or inviting them to go swimming to try to find out their caste.**

**Ajith: \*laughs\***

These sort of Brahminist techniques are to ferret out one's caste. In Kerala at one time it was very common, you see, because in Kerala there was a big movement against caste during the colonial period and later also as well as then the communist movement. So, at one point it was considered rather impolite to mention your caste or ask somebody what their caste was. But people had to know the caste also. I mean, that's one thing. But on the other hand, they really had to find out which caste this guy is from. So, the method employed would be to ask what is your father's name? Suppose you just mentioned the name without adding the caste surname. So then they will ask about your mother's name and this name and that name. So the basic thing is to

she has arrived at now, because there might be some seeds of that [betrayal] in those works itself. That has to be done. I have not done that, so I'm not able to give a definitive opinion on that. But at the same time, whatever is positive in those works, whatever is of value in those works, has to be accepted.

I mean, just because the person who wrote that at one time has now become a traitor to the masses and the revolutionary movement does not eradicate or eliminate the correctness of what was said at that time. So that would be the proper Maoist or Marxist approach to this. You synthesize what is correct and go ahead.

Those who have left and gone, that's their bother. But what remains is the correctness of what is said. And, there I think that she did make an important contribution. The one thing that I remember is the analysis of the disappearing women or disappearing comrades, women comrades. I don't remember exactly the way she formulated it. But, the point she was making was how, with various movements, the student's movement, the big agitations and all that, a lot of young women used to come forward and play a very active role. And, showing how inevitably, sooner or later, they would fall in love with some other male comrade. They would get married, and that's the end of it. She would be totally out of all political or public activity, at least public political activity, and restricted to the role of a housemaker, as they call it now. And, her political initiative and all that would be just blocked. So this she had characterized as a matter of the disappearing women comrades.

It was drawing an analogy with the disappearing women child. Because of abortion, of women fetuses and all that, there was a big situation in South Asia. The female population was severely getting decreased in [certain states]. So using that as an analogy, she had pointed out how we have a case here of disappearing women comrades precisely because of this act of marriage, when they get married and all that. Of course, it's not necessarily that he is a male chauvinist. But, ultimately what happens is that, objectively, the women comrade gets restricted to a house, bringing up a family and all that, while the male comrade continues as a full activist and continuing whatever he was doing



earlier. So, this I think is an important observation.

She made a good critical point that she raised which has to be addressed by all revolutionary movements, something that you have to consciously take into account and see what measures can be taken. Because, the answer is not preventing people from falling in love and getting married. But, it's seeing that the women comrades continue to play their role as they wish even after they get married. So, that I think is an important thing and wherever Hisila Yami has ended up today does not deny the importance of that observation she made.

**Esperanza:** I also found her summation of some of the struggles that women comrades went through and I believe one of those struggles is what you were referring to. I do still find that helpful in our context today as we attempt to organize women into class struggle.

## **The u.s.a. and the global situation**

**Esperanza:** In the second part of your essay on Ukraine, you stated that the world is entering a period of great disorder and you cited the strenuous task of turning the disorder towards revolution. What is your assessment of the state of the international communist movement today over a year since you wrote that?

**Ajith:** Well, I'm not much informed about that presently. There are a lot of initiatives going on for uniting Maoist forces at the world level. That itself is a very positive development. And, as far as I understand there is a lot of ferment among the youth. In Europe, for example. I don't know much about America. The new efforts of organization, new initiatives to bring out theoretical journals—I just recently came to know about a theoretical journal that is being brought out by some comrades in the U.S.—all these new initiatives are coming. It is not yet seen in terms of organized forces, organized vanguard forces, making some decisive advances. But, at the same time, that ferment and the

**To make sense of this, many Ambedkarites in India and the U.S. recite the quote from Dr. Ambedkar that “if Hindus migrate to other regions on earth, Indian caste would become a world problem.” What do you make of the “export” of caste outside of India? And, is there a deeper economic and political explanation we can explore to make sense of this?**

**Ajith:** Well, Dr. Ambedkar's observation was absolutely correct. That has been proven again and again. For example, if you look at the indentured Indian labor in the Caribbean, people from all castes were taken as indentured labor. And, from what accounts I've read, I've seen that in the initial stages, there was no caste among themselves. There were, rather, a lot of intermarriages also. The slave masters treated them as slaves. There is no question of “you are being treated as a Brahmin” or a special category. But, once they stabilized there, then caste again started appearing.

And the second thing is, you have to keep in mind another of Dr. Ambedkar's observations that caste is not simply a division of labor, it's a division of laborers. That is what makes it so attractive to [the ruling classes] wherever in the world it is. Because, this is a very efficient manner of keeping the laborers divided, the oppressed divided, and it makes it more easier for them to control it.

So, definitely, caste is exported, taken along with this ideology of Brahmanism that is inherent to the upper castes who come from India. And, others. It's not just India, it's also there in Sri Lanka, it's also there in Pakistan, greatly less in Bangladesh. It's very much there in Nepal. It's a South Asian phenomenon.

Apart from that, the ruling classes of these countries would also find it convenient to promote this because it keeps the people divided. So, I think it's not just this ruling on this case as well as, I think, a decision rejecting an amendment or a law by a governor of some American state, I don't remember which one, where a Legislative Assembly had passed a law condemning discrimination and that was actually rejected by the governor. So, all these things show that there is an interest of



imperialist powers.

But the point is that the whole image that was there, that this is there, that has been there, it will always be, that is being shaken up. And, that actually creates a lot of openings for people to think, then if that is so, then why not think about beyond it also? Ideologically, also, a lot of new opportunities are opening up there for deepening the critique of the imperialist state, for deepening the critique of the various revisionist positions that have come up in that country, and for advancing a revolutionary life.

And, the objective situation is definitely propelling it forward. It's a very hazy analysis—if you can even call it analysis—but a hazy take on the situation.

**Esperanza:** I think that you have a very good read still, and I especially appreciate your focus on looking at the objective conditions becoming more favorable, as well as emphasizing the importance of a correct ideological line.

## **The export of caste oppression**

**Esperanza:** In the united states, we are currently seeing the rise of a movement to counter caste discrimination and violence, particularly against Dalit workers. Now, they have found a coalition of people beyond just other Dalit workers, for example, not only among other South Asians, but also with Oaxaqueños, people who are Indigenous to Oaxaca in Mexico.

And this movement comes amidst the recent dismissal of a lawsuit against the tech company Cisco, where a Dalit engineer was harassed and discriminated against by two Brahmin supervisors with full support of the company. The lawsuit was dismissed, and it's believed that it was dismissed due to the Hindu American Foundation, which is a right-wing Hindu group which claimed that protections based on caste are “hinduphobic.”

attempts for regrouping, reuniting, and all these things do indicate the potential in the scene that is still there.

And, the world conditions, on the one hand there is all these wars going on, there is increasing contention of imperialist powers. But apart from that and beyond that, there is the sharpening of inequalities in the world. It's reached stupendous levels as well as the gross oppression, control, fascization of societies and all these things which are bringing up bigger and bigger volumes of resistance.

Look at this thing that we are seeing in the u.s. today. I don't know exactly who these people are but a group of Jewish youth protesting in the Capitol Hill against the Zionist state. This is something new. Where does this come from? Of course, they might be backed by one or the other ruling-class sections, etc., etc. They might be petit-bourgeois, bourgeois, I don't know. But, the point is that some sections of the ruling class have decided to do it, to get a group of youth to go and do that. The fact that they managed to get a group of youth, Jewish youth, and the fact that they managed to do that, or that they felt the necessity of doing that, indicates the situation in the world.

They feel that they have to address this, to put up some safety valves here and there. Because, otherwise, this thing can turn into something more extreme and really dangerous for them. So, you see all these events taking place around the world, in India and in other countries. The situation is still the same. But we need more effort on the part of the organized vanguard forces to capitalize on the situation and push ahead. There is still some lag there. We have not yet been able to resolve that. But that, in itself, does not deny the potential of the situation. That's what I'm trying to stress. The situation is there.

You can have a look at what happened in Sri Lanka. A year before or something, there was a huge outpouring of youth anger and dissatisfaction and finally they forced the government to resign and for the prime minister to flee the country. Now, ultimately, it did not lead to anything because the old political figures came back as rulers and all that. But, the youth that participated in that movement, the

masses of Sri Lanka who witnessed that movement and saw how such a gathering or a forceful outburst of anger against the rulers could make them flee, that lesson will never be lost. The awareness that has been created will never be lost. That will remain there. And, that is the most important thing. There is the potential, it is increasing and if we try we can definitely mobilize it, organize it, and make it into a powerful revolutionary force.

**Esperanza:** In the u.s. we are a very stagnant place. The revolutionary left is still very weak. The labor unions are under the auspices of the imperialist Democratic Party. The Revisionist parties are the largest on the left and push parliamentary politics. And, we're also seeing an increase in repression and censorship both by state agencies, such as the f.b.i., as well as corporate entities such as technology companies or other companies firing their workers for speaking out about Palestine, for example. Do you have anything to offer those of us in the united states that can help us think through pivoting these rather disparate forces towards more revolutionary and internationalist aims?

**Ajith:** Well, I really cannot contribute much on that because I really don't know anything about the actual situation in the u.s. But, from the media reports and various articles that I've read, it's very clear that the unrest among the masses—among various classes, not just the basic masses, but among the petit-bourgeois, the upper echelons of the petit-bourgeois itself—has increased tremendously in the post-COVID situation.

How do you access this wave of auto-worker strikes? As far as I know, the auto workers are one of the better paid sections of workers in amerika. But, you have the series of auto-worker strikes all over the country as well as crossing over to kanada. And, the interesting thing is the u.s. president coming out with a statement saying that the management should take this into consideration, that they should pay some attention to this. I'm not exactly remembering the words that he used, but rather than taking a stand to smash that struggle, whatever it may come to be, he's taking a reconciliatory approach. Now, that of

course is related to the upcoming elections. But, also I think it reflects the mood of the people. They have to pay attention to that.

And, the various other things. For example, this anti-abortion stand taken by the Supreme Court and the various rules, the legislations passed by the various state governments. What sort of repercussions is it having among the women? This unrest and unease and protests and strike actions, all these things are increasing. So, obviously, the objective situation is getting more favorable.

Now, as I mentioned earlier, the question is not whether you are a big force or a small force. The question is whether you have a correct analysis of these developments and if you are able to put forward correct positions, slogans, pointing the way forward. Because, if you are able to do that you would be able to influence a huge section of people far beyond those in your narrow circle. And, that is how things start moving.

The technological capacity [in the u.s.] is far more than any other country in the world. The technology-equipped youth, for one thing, and the availability of such material. So, all these things put together—with a proper line and a proper determination to study the past, seek out the errors, identify them, rectify them and start with whatever you have—get into practice and put out positions on the developments taking place in the country. That's the way you can move forward. And, I'm sure that a new generation of revolutionary forces will definitely emerge in that country. It has a rich history of revolutionary struggle, of communist movements and all that. So there is much to hope for there.

Another thing is that the u.s. imperialists have been forced to reverse a number of their policies. That itself also shows the weakness of the enemy. Like NAFTA, for example. They are giving it up. This whole trade arrangement they had, the whole project of globalization itself, is being questioned. And, various other aspects are also being [questioned]. There is now talk about the need to reform the World Bank. Of course, all this is also related to the contention among